



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
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November 7, 2007

Dear Colleague:

As was described in a broadcast fax (dated October 3, 2007), the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH) is launching a statewide educational campaign for the general public entitled: *Flu: What You can Do – Caring for People at Home*. It will build upon and complement ongoing efforts for both seasonal influenza prevention and pandemic planning in the Commonwealth. This letter gives you an update on the status of the campaign.

The initiative includes two major components:

1. State-wide Distribution of Educational Materials (booklet and video)

By the end of November, you will receive a package of booklets and a video. These are being distributed to all local boards of health, as well as community health centers, school nurses and other community organizations. In addition, one copy of the video will be sent to all cable access stations. The booklet is designed to be a resource for people during both seasonal flu and pandemic flu, and emphasizes the steps that individuals can take to be prepared to care for a loved one at home – and when to seek medical advice. The 20-minute video presents a summary of the key information presented in the booklet and can be played in office waiting rooms, during a health class or educational presentation.

Your package will contain 100 – 300 booklets (100 for populations under 25,000; 200 for populations between 25,000 and 75,000; 300 booklets for populations over 75,000). The attached order form enables you to order additional copies of both materials as necessary. We will do our best to get additional copies back out to you in early December.

MDPH is looking for your help in distributing this information to the public. Please pass on copies of the booklet to the public whom you serve, and display the booklet in areas where people will see it. Spanish and Portuguese translations are in process and will be available early in 2008. The booklet and additional information related to seasonal and pandemic flu are also available on the MDPH website at www.mass.gov/dph/flu. The video will be posted by the end of November.

2. Implementation of Community Outreach and Education

Public education and community outreach are essential to this campaign. Local public health partners along with healthcare professionals are the backbone of seasonal flu prevention as well as pandemic planning. The goal of this component is to recruit and train a core group of local public health professionals, community health center educators, school nurses and MRC volunteers. These “education team” members will be willing to conduct outreach, organize and implement educational presentations within their organization or in their community specifically to support the state-wide *Flu Care at Home* initiative.

To assist with the community outreach and education efforts, MDPH and the Local Public Health Training Institute of Massachusetts will be hosting a series of 10 train-the-trainer sessions around the state starting in December 2007. Five dates are currently scheduled; you can visit the Institute's website at www.masslocalinstitute.org for the schedule. Please consider attending and being part of the community outreach.

Thank you in advance for your assistance in educating Massachusetts residents about the flu and flu care at home. We appreciate your support in furthering public health and preparedness in the Commonwealth. If you have questions about the campaign or would like additional support rolling out flu education in your community, please contact your MDPH regional health educator (see attached list), or call MDPH, Division of Epidemiology and Immunization at 617-983-6800.

Sincerely,

John Auerbach
Commissioner